November 2014

# Marshfield Veterinary Service

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Dairy Good News

## Benefits of 3X Calf Feeding

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At last month’s World Dairy expo, Dr. Donald Sockett DVM, PhD presented results of a research project he conducted along with researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Ag and Life Sciences. They looked at both the short and long term impacts of feeding a full-potential milk replacer diet to two groups of 35 calves either two or three times a day. The two groups of calves were raised identically except that one group was fed milk replacer twice a day while the other group was fed three times per day. Both groups received the same total amount of milk replacer per day.

At six weeks of age, calves in the three times a day group were significantly taller, weighed more and had better feed efficiency. Additionally, they ate more calf starter during the last week before weaning. Most importantly, of the 35 heifers in the three times a day group, 34 eventually entered the milking herd while just 28 of the 35 heifers in the twice a day group entered the milking herd. Dr. Socket explained that having 28 of 35 heifers eventually enter the milking herd is consistent with the national average. He said, “For every six calves fed three times a day, one additional heifer joined the milking herd. That’s a lot of money.”

The calves in the twice a day group gained 55.3 pounds and grew 3.4 inches in the first 42 days of life while those in the three times a day group gained an average of 65.7 pounds and grew 4.0 inches. Also, in the twice a day group, average age at first calving was 734 days compared to 718 days in the three times group. The average 305 day milk production during the first lactation for the twice a day group was 28,777 pounds compared to 29, 912 pounds for the three times group.

One reason commonly given by producers to not feed calves three times per day is increased labor. However, Dr. Sockett noted that there was little difference between the two groups of calves. The three times a day calves tended to be healthier and while feeding took more time with this group, workers spent more time feeding electrolytes and treating sick calves in the twice a day group.

Dr. Sockett said that feeding calves twice a day likely became the custom on most farms because cows were traditionally milked twice per day. Producers fed their calves in sync with milking times, not by a schedule that was most healthful for the calves. If left with their mothers, calves will nurse eight to twelve times per day during the first week of life and by thirty days of age, a calf will nurse an average of four times per day.

According to Dr. Sockett, “I think, in the future, three times a day feeding will be the norm, and feeding twice a day will be viewed as Neanderthal.”

Three times a day feeding is also very beneficial to calves that receive inadequate colostrum after birth and suffer from failure of passive transfer or FPT. Of calves in the study that were determined to suffer from FPT, only 13 of 19 (68%) calves in the twice a day group reached adulthood and entered the milking herd while in the three times group this number was 15 of 16 (94%). Dr. Sockett believes that more frequent feeding is a good way to help control variables in calf rearing.

With the fall season once again here, it is important to review pneumonia prevention strategies for the dairy herd. It is important for dairy cows and replacements to be current with their vaccines. Fall is a good time to vaccinate cows with a 9 way vaccine before the harsh winter weather sets in. Marshfield Veterinary Service keeps CattleMaster GOLD FP 5 L5 and Triangle 10 vaccines in stock. Both of these products require a booster dose to be given 2-4 weeks after the initial dose, and then a single yearly booster to be given in subsequent years. Both products are safe to give to cows at any stage of gestation. Alternatively, another common strategy to vaccinate dairy cows is to vaccinate the herd’s open cows with a live vaccine such as BoviShield Gold FP 5L5. This method requires more record keeping but may provide improved immunity because of the use of a live vaccine. However, if a pregnant cow is given this vaccine and has not had it within the previous 12 months, she could abort, thus the need for good records. Since every farm is different, you should discuss your vaccination protocols with any of the veterinarians from Marshfield Veterinary Service.

Don’t Forget Fall Vaccinations

**We’re on the Web!**

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Reproduction Drugs Special Offer

Marshfield Veterinary Service currently has special pricing on prostaglandin and GnRH from Parnell. Estroplan is $1.56 per dose when purchased in 50 dose bottles compared to $2.35 per dose for Estrumate and $2.70 for Lutalyse when purchased in their large bottles. Estroplan is also available in 10 dose bottles for $1.90 per dose. Please remember that the dose for Estroplan is 2cc compared to 5cc for Lutalyse. Similarly, Gonabreed is available for $1.63 per dose in 100 dose bottles while Factrel is $2.18, Fertagyl is $1.89 and Cystorelin is $2.04 or $2.65 depending on bottle size. Gonabreed is also available in 20 dose bottles for just $1.65 per dose. This pricing is good while supplies last. Please note that Gonabreed has a 1cc dose while other GnRH products have a 2cc dose. Even with the 1cc dose, there is more active ingredient in Gonabreed than in the 2cc dose of other GnRH products. Please contact our office or one of the doctors if you are interested in purchasing either of these products.

Congratulations Dr. Jess and Kyle

We would like to congratulate Dr. Jess and her husband Kyle on the birth of their son, Turner John Southwick, born on October 9. He was 8 lbs. 7 oz. and 21 inches long. Mother and son are both doing well.

